

solved the problem. He has just swept it under the rug, and he has, arguably, made it worse.

This crisis is complex, but the solution isn't. The administration needs to engage with Congress and enforce our immigration laws that are on the books and those that are being exploited by the international criminal networks that are smuggling people into the United States on a daily basis.

We need to work together to address those gaps that are being exploited. If migrants from any country see that the United States is quickly detaining and removing people who do not have a legal basis to remain in our country, the flow of illegal immigration will drop dramatically. That is the only viable path forward and where the administration should focus its time and effort.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

BRISTOL BAY

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to applaud the Biden administration and their historic step to permanently protect Bristol Bay, AK. More than a decade after the Pebble Mine was proposed, the Environmental Protection Agency, today, is finalizing a Clean Water Act protection that will permanently protect Bristol Bay. No company will ever be able to stick a mine on top of some of the best salmon habitat in the world.

Salmon fishermen from Alaska and from my home State of Washington will continue to earn their livelihoods from Bristol Bay salmon, as they have for generations. No Bristol Bay salmon will ever have to swim through toxic soup just to get to its spawning grounds.

This scientific decision today by the Environmental Protection Agency puts a final nail in this mine's proposal.

It is difficult to understand and to really know the importance of Bristol Bay. In an average year, 40 to 60 million sockeye salmon swim into or out of the bay. Last year was a blockbuster run. Nearly 80 million sockeye salmon returned to Bristol Bay.

That is why Bristol Bay is known as the holy grail of salmon. Today, Bristol Bay salmon fisheries are a \$2.2 billion annual industry. They support over 15,000 jobs in the Pacific Northwest and nationwide, and that is through commercial fishing, recreational fishing, tourism, seafood, restaurants, shipbuilding, and other associated industries.

I know the Presiding Officer knows this well because northern California also benefits from these salmon sectors and the salmon industry.

Salmon are one of the most important products that we in the Pacific Northwest have. It is the symbol of our region. So Bristol Bay salmon, being a powerhouse and supporting nearly half of the sockeye salmon harvested

around the globe, is certainly worth fighting for.

So, as you can imagine, when a mining corporation decided to try to build a mine in the headwaters of this most powerful salmon run on the planet, fishermen in my State and in many other States were outraged. Estuaries and mines really don't mix, and they certainly don't belong together at the headwaters of one of the most important salmon runs and spawning grounds in the Nation.

For fishermen, the destruction wrought by Pebble Mine would have swept away their businesses and their way of life, and they certainly raised their voices and came to ask me and others in Washington for help.

In 2011, I was proud to stand with fishermen and Tribes from my State and from Alaska to speak out against Pebble Mine and to call for permanent protections under the Clean Water Act if the science showed that the mine would have irreversible impacts on salmon. Well, sure enough, the science is damning, and that is what is being released as part of this decision today.

In 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency found that more than 185 miles of streams and over 3,800 acres of wetlands would be permanently damaged or destroyed by Pebble Mine due to its toxic waste and habitat destruction, and that is just if the mine operated the way it was supposed to. That wasn't considering the kind of degradation that could happen if an accident happened. Those statistics don't account for a potential mine disaster that could really wipe out this irreplaceable ecosystem.

So despite the clear science, the mining company has continued to claim that protecting Bristol Bay is a partisan government overreach. Their executives believe that stripping all the gold and copper out of Bristol Bay is a worthy goal, more important than our wild salmon or more important than the generations of Washington and Alaska fishermen who earn their livelihood from that.

Protecting our fishing economy should not be a partisan issue, and that is why Congress created a fail-safe Clean Water Act provision called section 404(c). This provision says that if disposal or dredging in a waterway would destroy fisheries, municipal water, or have other serious impacts, the Environmental Agency could step in to stop the project.

It is a simple concept, really: Let's not destroy a profitable, sustainable industry that keeps the water clean for the sake of just temporary extracting.

Still, this authority in 404(c) isn't used lightly. Since 1972, millions of Clean Water Act permits have been approved, compared to only 14 times that this provision has been used to stop major projects like the one today that is being stopped at Pebble Mine.

Republican Presidents have used this Clean Water 404(c) authority 11 times. Let me say that again.

It has only been implemented 14 times in our history, and 11 times it was used by a Republican President. Ronald Reagan alone used the Clean Water Act 404 authority 8 times.

So there was a time when people believed in this conservation. They believed in making sure that we preserve what is so unique about our planet.

To sum it up, a multinational corporation thought that it could go to one of the most iconic salmon runs on the planet and decimate those jobs that we rely on in Bristol Bay and tear a hole in the culture of our Northwest fabric. And fishermen and we here said: No.

I am proud of the scientific work done by the Environmental Protection Agency under President Biden, the University of Washington, and so many of the environmental partners that fought so hard to stop this project.

I am proud to have stood with the fishermen and Tribes of Bristol Bay in saying we need to protect this unique place forever.

I want to thank some of our greatest champions: The United Tribes of Bristol Bay, the Bristol Bay Native Corporation, and the fishing families in Alaska and Washington.

I want to thank my staff, Nikki Teutschel, Amit Ronen, and Jeff Watters, who, through a decade, all continued this fight to make sure that every administration was listening to this cause.

It seemed like a "David and Goliath" many times, this battle, but we know today that the voices of fishermen at Bristol Bay provided the leadership that we needed to preserve this area forever and said no to this project.

Fishermen know that the Pacific Northwest salmon is worth more than copper, and today, salmon is even worth more than gold. It is our Pacific way of life, and thanks to this administration, it will be protected.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Democratic whip.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it took 15 votes for KEVIN MCCARTHY to become Speaker of the House of Representatives. It may not have been historic, but it was a sight to behold. To finally become Speaker, KEVIN MCCARTHY made all kinds of commitments to the MAGA extremists in his Republican Party.

One of the promises he made to the hard-right holdouts in order to become Speaker was that House Republicans